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ABSTRACT

California's Statewide Longitudinal Study (SLS) of community college students reveals that student services are needed and appear to be effective. Evidence supporting this contention were obtained from a special run of data from third-year interviews with 4,120 of the original sample of 6,490 students. These data indicate that: (1) the level of use of student services, though low, is generally meeting or surpassing expressed need; (2) the percentage of students using specific services by their third year ranged from 40.5% for counseling to 1.9% for women's centers; (3) while only 4% of the students expressed a need for tutorial services in their first year, over 20% had used the service by their third year; (4) 40% of the respondents expressed a need for career planning assistance in their first year; however, only 8.9% had used the service by their third year; (5) over 13% of the students reported using financial aid by their third year, though a rather high proportion were dissatisfied with the experience; and (6) a low proportion of students made use of job placement services. SLS implications include the following: assessment of need for student services should go beyond self-assessment; career planning services should be better publicized and more available; and additional research and development activities should address financial aid, job placement and development, re-entry students, and the service needs of handicapped, nontraditional, and Limited English Speaking students. (HB)

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# IMPLICATIONS OF SLS FOR STUDENT SERVICES

(Other than Admissions, Records, Student Information, Counseling, Guidance, and Placement)

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IMPLICATIONS OF SLS FOR STUDENT SERVICES
(Other than admissions, records, student information, counseling, guidance, and placement)

The major implication to be drawn from the SLS data for student services in California community colleges is that the services are needed and appear to be effective. Evidence for this implication is the lack of differences between student groups where divergence would be expected. Comparisons between Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites ". . . showed less difference between ethnic groups in terms of academic attendance, academic performance, academic aspirations, and jobs than is generally believed."[1] Comparisons between financially disadvantaged and other students also led the SLS researchers to conclude that ". . . there is no pattern that shows that being Financially Disadvantaged is a definitive bar to aspiration or achievement in community colleges."[2] Furthermore, the researchers found that educational disadvantage did not have a great effect on enrollment patterns and only a small effect on grade point average. Additionally, there were few differences noted between men and women in the study, except that more women attend the colleges and this is true in every age category.

The SLS data do not offer a cause and effect relationship for the above observations and the services provided at the colleges. Nevertheless, it would only seem reasonable to surmise that services designed to overcome traditional barriers to education must have played a part in the realization of these goals. Tutoring has aided the educationally disadvantaged; EOPS has helped ethnic minorities achieve parity in attendance, performance, aspirations, and jobs; financial aids and job placement have made it possible for financially disadvantaged students to persist; and child care and women's centers have made it possible for more women to attend.

Other SLS data provide further confirmation for these contentions. Data relating directly to student expressed need for some student services and corresponding levels of satisfaction have already been reported and published by the SLS researchers. This writer ordered a special data run of the results of the interviews in the third year of the study with 4120 of the original 6490 students, and those data provide further information on the extent of use of services as well as user satisfaction. Relevant information from those interviews is reported below.

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[1] Statewide Longitudinal Study, Part 4, p. 8-5.

[2] Ibid, p. 5-12.

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The most startling finding from the special data run is the apparent low use of the services by students. However, the level of use compared to expressed need for the service suggests that student use is generally meeting or surpassing expressed need.

The percentage of interviewees who reported using specific student services by the third year ranged from a high of 40.5% for counseling services to a low of 1.9% for women's centers. Interviews of students three years earlier indicated self expressed need for a different kinds of counseling services ranging from less than 2% for veterans counseling to 40+% for career counseling. Furthermore, a full 43% of the new students in the fall of 1978 said that they needed no counseling service.[3] There are some obvious problems in comparing the third-year data on use and satisfaction with the first-year data on expressed need. Perhaps the most serious problem is whether expressed need may have changed over the three-year period. Thus, in examining the data this problem should be kept in mind. Nevertheless, such data are helpful in determining whether services appear to be meeting the originally expressed needs. For example, the fact that 40.5% of the third-year interviewees had used counseling may be a defensible figure in view of the fact that 43% of the intial enrollees said that they did not need counseling. To achieve a higher use, a college may have to mandate counseling or undertake activities to stimulate a greater interest in counseling by students.

*Table 1*

RANK ORDER OF SERVICE BY PERCENTAGE OF USE
REPORTED BY 4100 STUDENTS IN THE SLS SAMPLE IN THE THIRD YEAR

| Service | % of Sample Who Had Used the Service |
|---|---|
| Counseling | 40.5 |
| Tutorial or Learning Center | 20.4 |
| Financial Aids | 13.1 |
| Career Planning | 8.9 |
| Job Placement | 10.0 |
| Women's Center | 1.9 |

[3] Ibid, Part I, p. 50.

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*Table 2*

COUNSELING NEEDS REPORTED BY STUDENTS
IN THE FIRST SEMESTER OF THE SLS STUDY[4]

| Counseling Service | % of Students Expressing Need for the Service | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Male* | *Female* |
| Transfer | 25 | 19 |
| Career | 40 | 46 |
| Personal | 5 | 5 |
| Tutorial | 4 | 4 |
| Financial | 3 | 5 |
| Veterans | 2 | .4 |
| Academic | 20 | 20 |

Tutorial or Learning Center

Since only 4% of the initial enrollees indicated a need for tutorial counseling, it may be surprising to find that over 20% of the students had used the service by the third year. However, the fact that 15% of the initial enrollees had said that they would need help with things like math and reading suggests a much higher real need for tutoring than the expressed need. This in itself suggests that real needs may differ significantly from expressed needs for services. An implication from such a finding is that assessment to determine need for student services should go beyond student self assessment by using more objective data.

Users of tutorial services reported an amazingly high level of satisfaction. Over 82% of the users were completely satisfied by the service. Such satisfaction may also help account for the fact that one out of every five students had used the service. Success does breed success.

*Table 3*

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION BY PERCENTAGE OF USERS OF SERVICES
AS REPORTED IN THE THIRD YEAR OF THE SLS

| Service | % Unsatisfied | % Partially Satisfied | % Completely Satisfied |
|---|---|---|---|
| Counseling | 8.1 | 28.0 | 63.9 |
| Career Planning | 4.3 | 28.7 | 67.0 |
| Tutorial or Learning Center | 3.7 | 14.3 | 82.1 |
| Women's Center | 4.5 | 34.3 | 61.2 |
| Financial Aids | 13.6 | 23.1 | 63.3 |
| | Didn't Get a Job | Helped to Get a Job | Got a Job |
| Placement | 44.1 | 12.0 | 43.9 |

Career Planning

Career planning is the one service where usage does not even come close to meeting expressed need. Only 8.9% of the sample had used career planning services by the third year of the study when more than 40% had expressed a need for career counseling when they first enrolled. Those who did use it seem to be relatively well satisfied, with only 4.3% reporting to be unsatisfied. Unavailability and/or unawareness of the service could account for some lack of use. Almost 12% of the third-year interviewees indicated that career planning was unavailable. Furthermore, the service may not be as available to evening students where the need may be the greatest. SLS students interviewed in their second year of enrollment reported a need for career counseling in a much larger proportion than day students. This is particularly significant when viewed against other data showing twice the proportion of day than night students indicating a need for more than one kind of counseling.[5] Thus a clear implication of this information is that career planning should reflect a higher use by students which might be achieved by creating more awareness and/or availability of the service, particularly for evening students.

Financial Aids

SLS data relating to financial aids are very difficult to interpret. The SLS researchers report that up to one-third of the Financially Disadvantaged students were unaware of the availability of financial aids. Yet, only 3 to 5% of the initial enrollees indicated a need for financial aids counseling. And, over 13% of the students reported using financial aid by the third year. Furthermore, the attendance record of the self identified financially disadvantaged students is comparable to non-disadvantaged students.

To make sense of these data more objective information is needed. Whether students who report that they anticipate having difficulty with money truly represents financial disadvantage is clearly open to question. What is needed is an analysis of the number of unfunded students who were eligible for aid and what has happened to them as compared to their counterparts who received aid. Without that kind of information, serious misinterpretations of the SLS data could be made leading to support for, or opposition to, more financial aid based on questionable data.

It should be noted that a rather high proportion of students were dissatisfied with their experience in financial aid. Even casual observers would hypothesize that the 13+% students were not satisfied with the service because of insufficiency of aid and red-tape.

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[5] Ibid, Part II, p. 60.

Job Placement

There were no statistics available on the number of students who expressed a need for job placement service. However, it would seem clear that there is a high need for such service with almost 3/4 of the students reporting employment while attending in the first year of the study. Some 35 percent were employed full-time and another 24% were employed from 11 to 30 hours a week. The mean wage was $4.27.[6] Thus, one might expect a high demand for job placement services for assistance in getting employment and in improving employment opportunities. Furthermore, with the recent interest in vocational training, job placement becomes a key service in helping students realize their goals. Yet, only 10% of the students reported use of job placement by the third year of the study. Almost 56% of the users reported either having been helped to get a job or had got a job through the service but just over 44% did not get a job. It appears that much more attention should be given to job placement service, including job development. This may become even more crucial if federal student aid is reduced.

Women's Centers

With the high proportion of female enrollees, one might expect a higher use of women's centers than the 1.9% of the interviewees in the third year of the study. Whether such centers were available at each college was not indicated, and may partially explain the low usage if they were not available. The small number of displaced homemakers in the study in addition to the relatively small numbers of separated, divorced, and widowed women may also help explain the low use. The proportion of separated, divorced, and widowed males in the study was even smaller than for women.

*Table 4*[7]

SEX BY MARITAL STATUS

| | % Separated | % Divorced | % Widowed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 1 | 3 | .1 |
| Female | 2 | 6 | 1.0 |

An implication of the low use of women's centers combined with the low percentage of separated, divorced, and widowed students is that re-entry efforts should be reviewed to ascertain whether more can be done to help men and women attend who are separated, divorced, and widowed.

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[6] Ibid, Part I, p. 38

[7] Ibid, Part I, p. 34

Other Services for Special Groups

The authors of the SLS concluded in Part 4 of their reporting that services to special groups appear to be adequate. However, they pointed out that the report was based on insufficient information because of the small numbers of displaced homemakers, non-traditional majors, LESA, and handicapped students in the sample. It was recommended that to obtain definitive information, special samples of each student group should be selected and an in-depth, longitudinal study carried out. To explore whether the limited information now on hand could point any directions for further research, this writer ordered a special data run on handicapped students who were interviewed in the third year of the study. Some of the questions that can be raised by examining those data are:

1. Why were there more males than females in the handicapped sample? (54.9% male, 45.1% female)
2. Why is there such a large proportion of handicapped in the 15-19 age bracket and such a small percentage in the 20-24 age bracket? (15-19 = 26.8%, 20-24 = 15.8%)
3. Compared to the initial sample of all students, handicapped students were more than twice as likely to be divorced than other students. Has this caused unique problems for the handicapped students? Are the colleges providing appropriate counseling?
4. Handicapped students report a language problem in class ranging from slight (19.0%) to moderate (14.3%) to great (4.8%). Is appropriate assistance available to reduce this barrier to success? Is it effective?
5. Almost one-third of the handicapped students reported financial disadvantagement. This is in contrast to 16% of the total original sample so identified. Are successful efforts made to help handicapped students meet their financial difficulties?
6. Almost 29% of the handicapped reported an educational disadvantage as compared to 15% of the total original sample. Has special assistance been effective?
7. Almost 15% of the handicapped students were classified as "Hobbyists" under the SLS prototype system. This may have implications for state funding rather than for student services if one accepts the notion that a certain proportion of handicapped students can profit most from learning a hobby. Current thinking in the state is to reduce funds for such courses, but few proponents have considered the fact that many of the enrollees in such hobby-type courses are handicapped.

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8. Almost 20% of the handicapped students had been in continuous attendance for 6 consecutive semesters. Are these students making progress toward a goal or are the colleges merely providing a place for them to be?

The SLS data while insufficient to make definitive generalizations provide a good basis for directing further research on handicapped students, displaced homemakers, non-traditional students, and LESA students.

Summary of Implications for Student Services

1. Student services are needed and are effective in helping students overcome traditional barriers to education.
2. Student use of services seems low but is generally meeting or surpassing expressed need.
3. Assessment to determine need for student services should go beyond student self assessment by using more objective data.
4. Career planning should reflect a higher use by students which might be achieved by creating more awareness and/or availability of the service, particularly for evening students.
5. More objective information is needed about financial aids, particularly with respect to the number of eligible students who do not receive aid and the extent to which they succeed.
6. Much more attention should be given to Job Placement, including job development.
7. Re-entry efforts should be reviewed to ascertain whether more can be done to help men and women attend who are separated, divorced, and widowed.
8. The SLS data while insufficient to make definitive generalizations provide a good basis for directing further research on handicapped students, non-traditional students, and LESA students. Among questions raised by the research on the handicapped students are the following:
   a. Why are there fewer female than male handicapped students?
   b. Why is there a large proportion of 15-19 year old handicapped students but a small proportion of 20-24 year olds?
   c. Are the additional disadvantages of the handicapped (besides the handicap itself) such as divorce, educational disadvantage, and financial disadvantage adequately met by special services?
   d. What is the State position toward allowing a sizeable proportion of handicapped students to pursue hobbies in the colleges?
   e. Are the handicapped students who have a long record of continuous enrollment making progress toward a goal?

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